THE CHILLING ARCHIVES OF HORROR COMICS!™

HAUNTED HORROR™

Mr. KARSWELL

#31

Mr. Karswell illustration by Drazen Kozjan.

I'M BAAAAACK! DID EVERYONE MISS ME??? BEFORE WE NOSE DIVE INTO OUR PRESENT ***COLLECTION OF CRUMBLING CREEPIES,*** I'D LIKE TO THANK OUR PREVIOUS, GRIEVOUS GUEST HOSTS–***TOXIC THOMAS, DOC ODD,*** AND ***DIABLO***–FOR SCALDING OUR SOULS WITH THEIR OWN ***INSIDIOUSLY ICKY HAUNTED HORROR ISSUES!*** I WOULD SAY SOMETHING ABOUT A ROUND OF APPLAUSE FOR THEM, BUT SINCE THEY'VE ALREADY RETREATED BACK INTO THEIR RESPECTIVE ***CASKETS*** AND ***LOONY BIN BASKETS,*** PROBABLY THEY WOULDN'T HEAR IT ANYWAY! SO, ON TO CURRENT, CURSED EVENTS. I'VE BEEN OUT AND ABOUT, GRACELESSLY GATHERING MORE ***GAG-INDUCING GOODIES*** AND A FEW ***BLOOD-SOAKED BADDIES*** TO BOOT. AS YOU WILL SEE, THIS TERRIFYING TIME AROUND I HAVE ***HAIRY THINGS, SCARY THINGS, SCALY THINGS,*** AND ***COFFIN-Y THINGS!*** BUT FIRST UP, ***HEADLESS THINGS!*** SO KEEP YOUR OWN NOGGINS ***BOLTED ON TIGHT.*** BUT, IF THEY COME LOOSE, YOU CAN ALWAYS BORROW MY ***STAPLE GUN!***

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Look for another spine-tingling issue of *Haunted Horror* in two months!

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HEH, HEH, SO YOU'RE STILL HERE, EH, FIENDS? WELL YOU WON'T BE SORRY YOU **STUCK** AROUND, FELLOW TERRORISTS! I'VE GOT A DELIGHTFULLY GRUESOME TALE OF HORROR TO CHILL YOU WITH! IT'S FILLED WITH **MYSTERY** AND ANCIENT JU-JUBE TORTURES... I CALL IT...

THE DEATH HEAD!

Hy Fleishman

HENRY JEFFERY, AN ATTRACTIVE MAN IN HIS EARLY THIRTIES, WHISTLED AS HE DRESSED AND WHY NOT? IT WAS HIS WEDDING DAY...

LOOK YOUR BEST, HENRY BOY...THIS IS IT, THE BIG DAY! GOOD-BYE TO DEBTS AND POVERTY... FROM NOW ON, IT'S NOTHING BUT THE BEST FOR THIS BOY!

SO LONG TO CHEAP FURNISHED ROOMS... IN JUST TWO HOURS I'LL BE A WEALTHY MAN... MARRIED TO A TOBACCO QUEEN!

Mysterious Adventures #10, October 1952. Art: Hy Fleishman. Publisher: Story Comics.

OUR "HERO" ISN'T VERY ROMANTIC, IS HE? ALAS, SUCH IS THE POWER OF MONEY, HEH, HEH! NOW, LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT HENRY'S BRIDE-TO-BE, ANNE LAYTON...

OH LOOEL, THIS'LL BE THE BIGGEST WEDDING NEW ORLEANS HAS EVER SEEN! I WISH MOMMA AND POPPA HAD LIVED TO SEE IT! I KNOW THEY'D LOVE HENRY AS A SON-IN-LAW!

YOUR POPPA SMART MAN... MAKES LOTS OF MONEY! IF HENRY HURT YOU, I USE JU-JUBE!

OH, YES, ANNE'S FATHER HAD MADE A FORTUNE... AND WHEN HE AND HIS WIFE DIED, THEY LEFT ANNE WITH A TWO MILLION DOLLAR TOBACCO INHERITANCE... THERE WAS NOTHING SHE COULDN'T AFFORD TO BUY... EVEN A HUSBAND,, HEH! HEH! ...BUT LOOEL WORSHIPPED ANNE...

...IN SICKNESS, AND IN HEALTH, FOR RICHER OR POORER, TILL DEATH DO YOU PART?

I DO! ESPECIALLY FOR "RICHER" ...HA HA!

AND SO THEY WERE MARRIED... AFTER THEIR HONEYMOON, THE NEWLY-WEDS SETTLED IN ANNE'S PALATIAL ESTATE ON THE EDGE OF THE LOUISIANA BAYOU COUNTRY...

WILL THERE BE ANYTHING ELSE, MISS ANNE?

NO, LOOEL, THAT WILL BE ALL!

THAT WOMAN GIVES ME THE CREEPS, SHE'S SO QUIET, SO WITHDRAWN... LIKE A SNEAKY CAT!

YOU'RE WRONG, DARLING... THAT'S JUST LOOEL'S MANNER... SHE'S BEEN WITH THE FAMILY FOR YEARS! HER MOTHER WAS THE WIFE OF AN AFRICAN TRIBAL LEADER IN THE CANNIBAL COUNTRY! LOOEL WAS BROUGHT UP WITH THE TRIBE AND DAD BROUGHT HER HERE AS A YOUNG GIRL! SHE COULDN'T BE MORE LOYAL TO ME!

I THINK THIS LAZY LIVING IS MAKING YOU GROUCHY... COME ON, LET'S TAKE A FAST RIDE ON A COUPLE OF THE HORSES!

OKAY! I'LL EVEN RACE YOU!

AND SHORTLY AFTER...

HURRY UP SLOW POKE, I'M GOING TO BEAT YOU OVER THE HEDGE!

THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK, SILLY GIRL! I'LL MAKE IT OVER BEFORE YOU KNOW WHAT PASSED YOU!

BUT HENRY WAS WRONG... ANNE REACHED THE HEDGE FIRST AND..

SEE, I TOLD YOU I'D EEEKKK!

ANNE!

ANNE HIT THE GROUND WITH A SICKENING THUD...

M-MY BACK...OHHH... M-MY BACK...

I'M COMING, ANNE... I'M COMING!

HENRY CARRIED HIS WIFE'S CRUMPLED BODY BACK TO THE HOUSE AND A DOCTOR WAS IMMEDIATELY SUMMONED... AS HE WAITED FOR THE DOCTOR'S VERDICT...

M-MAYBE SHE'LL DIE...MAYBE THAT WHOLE FORTUNE WILL COME TO ME... ME ALONE!

BUT WHEN THE DOCTOR WALKED OUT...

DOCTOR, IS SHE... IS SHE...

NO, MR. JEFFERY, SHE'S NOT DEAD, BUT I'M AFRAID I HAVE BAD NEWS FOR YOU! YOUR WIFE HAS BEEN PARALYZED FROM THE WAIST DOWN! SHE'LL BE AN INVALID ALL THE REST OF HER LIFE!

POOR HENRY... ANNE'S PARALYSIS TURNED HIM FROM A LAZY PLAYBOY INTO A CONSTANT NURSE...

HENRY, GET ME MY GLASSES, WILL YOU, I CAN'T SEE TO READ WITHOUT THEM... AND BRING ME A BLANKET TOO, I'M CHILLY!

YES, DEAR!

AND SO IT WENT, MONTH IN AND MONTH OUT...

HENRY, TAKE THIS BACK TO THE KITCHEN AND TELL LOOEL TO MAKE IT HOTTER... I CAN'T BEAR COLD TEA!

HENRY, READ TO ME! MAYBE IT WILL HELP ME FALL ASLEEP!

HURRY BACK, HENRY... I DON'T WANT TO BE ALONE LONG...AND DON'T FORGET THAT NEW CROSSWORD PUZZLE MAGAZINE I TOLD YOU TO GET!

HENRY THOUGHT HE WOULD GO CRAZY, UNTIL, WHILE IN TOWN ON AN ERRAND FOR ANNE, HE MET KITTY...

HEY, WHY DON'T YOU WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING?

OH, I'M TERRIBLY SORRY...I WAS THINKING ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE... HOW ABOUT GIVING ME A CHANCE TO SHOW YOU THAT I'M NOT REALLY SUCH A BAD GUY? LUNCH, MAYBE?

AND THAT WAS HOW IT BEGAN... HENRY MET KITTY BURNETT EVERY TIME HE COULD GET AWAY FROM ANNE...

THIS IS THE THIRD NIGHT THIS WEEK YOU'VE GONE OUT, HENRY! I CAN'T BEAR BEING ALONE! I WANT YOU...

DARLING, IT'S FOR YOU I'M GOING OUT! DR. HOWARD TOLD ME OF A SPECIALIST IN JAMESTOWN THAT MIGHT BE ABLE TO TREAT YOU! I'M DRIVING OVER THERE TONIGHT... DON'T WAIT UP, I'LL PROBABLY BE LATE!

KITTY BURNETT WAS NO "SPECIALIST", BUT SHE KNEW HOW TO TREAT HENRY... HEH, HEH...

I'M MAD ABOUT YOU, KITTY... MAD ABOUT YOU!

YOU DON'T ACT IT... YOU NEVER TAKE ME ANYPLACE NICE... IT'S LIKE YOU'RE AFRAID TO BE SEEN WITH ME!

D-DON'T BE SILLY, DARLING... I... IT'S JUST THAT I LIKE TO HAVE YOU ALL TO MYSELF!

NO, HENRY HADN'T TOLD KITTY HE WAS MARRIED... HE WAS AFRAID OF LOSING HER! THAT NIGHT HE TOSSED RESTLESSLY, UNABLE TO SLEEP...

I CAN'T KEEP THIS PRETENSE UP MUCH LONGER... KITTY'S BOUND TO FIND OUT! OH, WHY DIDN'T ANNE DIE IN THAT ACCIDENT? EVERYTHING WOULD HAVE BEEN PERFECT... I'D HAVE THE MONEY AND KITTY!

B-BUT MAYBE ANOTHER "ACCIDENT" COULD BEFALL MY DEAR WIFE... A FATAL ACCIDENT! I'D BE FREE THEN... FREE!

HENRY SPENT THE REMAINDER OF THE NIGHT LAYING HIS PLANS... AND THE FOLLOWING MORNING...

AND THE SPECIALIST SAID HE COULDN'T DO ANYTHING, HENRY?

NO, DARLING, I'M AFRAID NOT!... BUT DON'T LOOK SO SAD... I'VE GOT A SPECIAL TREAT FOR US TODAY!

A TREAT? WHAT IS IT, DEAR?

I THOUGHT YOU'VE BEEN IN DOORS TOO MUCH LATELY... SO I'D THOUGHT WE'D GO INTO THE BAYOU COUNTRY FOR A PICNIC... JUST YOU AND ME!

NO! NO!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN "NO, NO" LOOEL?

BAYOU SWAMP BAD PLACE... LAND OF VOODOO! KEEP AWAY, BAD PLACE!

THAT'S NONSENSE... JUST A SILLY NATIVE SUPERSTITION! PACK US A LUNCH, LOOEL... WE'RE GOING!

HENRY'S PLANS WERE TOO WELL CALCULATED TO BE UPSET BY THE OLD LADY'S WARNING... AND SO, TWO HOURS LATER...

AND NOW, MY DEAR, WE'LL GO FOR A SHORT RIDE BEFORE LUNCH! BEAUTIFUL DAY, ISN'T IT?

YES... BUT THOSE CLOUDS OVER-HEAD LOOK LIKE IT MAY RAIN, DEAR!

HENRY WAS SO INTENT UPON HIS PADDLING AND THE THOUGHT OF HIS WIFE'S DEATH, THAT HE FAILED TO NOTICE THE QUICKLY DARKENING SKY AND OMINOUS THUNDER...

IT'S PERFECT... NO ONE WILL EVER SUSPECT... JUST ANOTHER "ACCIDENT"! ONE QUICK BLOW... AND INTO THE LAKE WITH HER...

OH, HENRY, LISTEN... I-IT'S THUNDERING! I-I'M JUST TERRI-FIED OF THUNDER! A-AND IT'S SO D-DARK...

A MINUTE LATER, THE RAINS STARTED, AND THEY WERE CAUGHT IN THE MIDST OF A BAYOU STORM! ANNE WAS PANIC-STRICKEN...

W-WE'RE GOING TO BE DROWNED... DO SOMETHING, HENRY... DO SOMETHING!

FOR PETE'S SAKE, TAKE IT EASY... ARE YOU TRYING TO OVER-TURN THE BOAT?

-ANNE MAY NOT HAVE BEEN TRYING, BUT A MOMENT LATER...

HOLD STILL, YOU FOOL, YOU'RE...

HELP, I... EEEKKKK!

POOR ANNE, SHE WAS PARALYZED AND DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE IN THE RAGING WATERS... HER HUSBAND WAS NO HELP TO HER!

HENRY, HELP! I-I'M (GLUB) D-DROWNING! HELP! HELP!

I CAN'T REACH YOU ANNE...

I'LL SAVE MYSELF! I WANTED HER TO DIE... NOW SHE WILL!

IT WASN'T MUCH OF A BATTLE... ANNE LOST TO THE WATER IN NO TIME... HENRY SAW HER HEAD DISAPPEAR JUST AS HE REACHED SHORE...

WELL, THIS ISN'T THE WAY I PLANNED IT... BUT IT'S EVEN BETTER! SO LONG, MY BELOVED WIFE... I'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOUR MILLIONS!

HENRY STARTED BACK TOWARD CIVILIZATION... BUT THE WIND AND RAIN HADN'T STOPPED AND HE FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO MAKE HIS WAY...

I WISH THIS AWFUL RAIN WOULD STOP... AND IT'S GETTING DARKER BY THE MINUTE! I CAN HARDLY SEE WHERE I'M GOING!

THE STORM CONTINUED WITH UNABATED FURY AS THE DARKNESS OF EVENING SETTLED OVER THE BAYOUS...

OUCH! IT'S SO DARK, I CAN'T EVEN SEE THESE DARN BRUSHES! IT CAN'T BE TOO MUCH FURTHER NOW... I MUST BE GETTING 'NEAR THE EDGE...

BUT THREE HOURS LATER...

T-THE LAKE! I-I'VE BEEN GOING IN A CIRCLE! OH, GOOD LORD, I-I'M LOST!

YES, HENRY WAS LOST... AND AS THE REMEMBRANCE OF MEN LOST FOREVER IN THE BAYOU SWAMP, CROSSED HIS MIND, HE GREW MORE FRANTIC AND PANIC STRICKEN BY THE MINUTE...

L-LOST IN THESE SWAMPS... GOTTA GET OUT... C-CAN'T DIE NOW... CAN'T...

JUST WHEN IT SEEMED THAT HE WOULD FALL FROM EXHAUSTION AND TERROR, HENRY SAW A LIGHT...

A LIGHT! HELP! HELP! I'M OVER HERE! HELP!

OUT OF THE DARKNESS, FROM BEHIND THE LIGHT, LOOMED A TALL GAUNT FIGURE...

LODEL! YOU CAME OUT AFTER US! THANK THE LORD, YOU FOUND ME! M-MRS. JEFFERY WAS IN AN A-ACCIDENT... SHE DROWNED!

YES, I KNOW... BUT FOLLOW ME! A FRIEND OF MINE HAS A CABIN NEARBY... YOU WILL SPEND THE NIGHT THERE!

HENRY WAS TOO RELIEVED AT BEING FOUND TO THINK IT STRANGE THAT LODEL KNEW AND DIDN'T COMMENT ON ANNE'S DEATH... SHE LED HIM TO A BATTERED CABIN HIDDEN IN THE OVERGROWTH OF THE SWAMP...

SO YOU FOUND HIM, LODEL! GOOD, BRING HIM IN!

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, MISTER, BUT I SURE AM GLAD TO SEE YOU! I WAS BEGINNING TO THINK I WAS A DEAD DUCK IN THAT SWAMP!

MY NAME IS VEJAR... I'VE LIVED IN THESE SWAMPS EVER SINCE I LEFT AFRICA MANY, MANY YEARS AGO! HERE, HAVE SOME COFFEE... IT'S MY OWN SPECIAL BLEND!

THANKS! SO YOU LIVED IN AFRICA, EH? ALONG THE COAST OR INLAND?

I LIVED INLAND... WITH THE JU-JUBE NATIVES! I WAS THEIR DOCTOR FOR MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS! I TAUGHT THEM ALL I KNEW... AND THEY TAUGHT ME ALL THEY KNEW!

SOUNDS INTERESTING... BUT WHAT COULD THEY TEACH YOU THAT YOU DIDN'T ALREADY KNOW?

OH, I LEARNED MANY THINGS, MR. JEFFERY... SUCH AS HOW TO SHRINK A HUMAN HEAD! THERE ARE TWO THAT I BROUGHT BACK WITH ME!

UGH! SOUNDS HORRIBLE TO ME! THIS IS REALLY STRONG COFFEE, IT'S MAKING ME RATHER SLEEPY!

THE NATIVES HAVE SOME INTERESTING BELIEFS, MR. JEFFERY... FOR INSTANCE, A WIFE'S HEAD CANNOT BE SHRUNKEN UNLESS HER HUSBANDS HEAD IS ALSO SHRUNKEN! THEY MUST NOT BE MATELESS!

THIS CONVERSATION IS TOO GORY FOR ME... BESIDES, I'M GETTING SO TIRED I THINK I'LL TAKE A SHORT NAP!

I DON'T THINK YOU'LL WANT TO SLEEP JUST YET, MR. JEFFERY... I HAVE SOMETHING HERE I THINK YOU'LL WANT TO SEE...

A-ANNE! ANNE'S H-HEAD! W-WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? I'M LEAVING, I... YOU'RE CRAZY!

BUT AS HENRY STRUGGLED IN HIS CHAIR, HE FOUND HE WAS INCAPABLE OF MOVING SO MUCH AS A MUSCLE...

I-I CAN'T MOVE ... I ...I...

NO, MR. JEFFERY, YOU CAN'T MOVE! THAT COFFEE YOU WERE DRINKING WAS A VERY SPECIAL BRAND... LOOEL MADE IT FOR YOU! LOOEL ALSO BROUGHT ME THIS VERY BEAUTIFUL HEAD!

AND NOW WE NEED YOUR HEAD, MR. JEFFERY... IT'S AN OLD "NATIVE" CUSTOM!

LOOEL! Y-YOU CAN'T! MISS ANNE WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO... YOU CAN'T... NO! NO!

YOU KILL MISS ANNE... I KILL YOU!

HE STRUGGLED, SCREAMED AND PLEADED, BUT IT DID NO GOOD... LOOEL KEPT COMING NEARER AND NEARER...

NO, LOOEL! NO! PLEASE... PLEASE...

YOU DIE, MR. JEFFERY, DIE! WE MAKE FEAST!

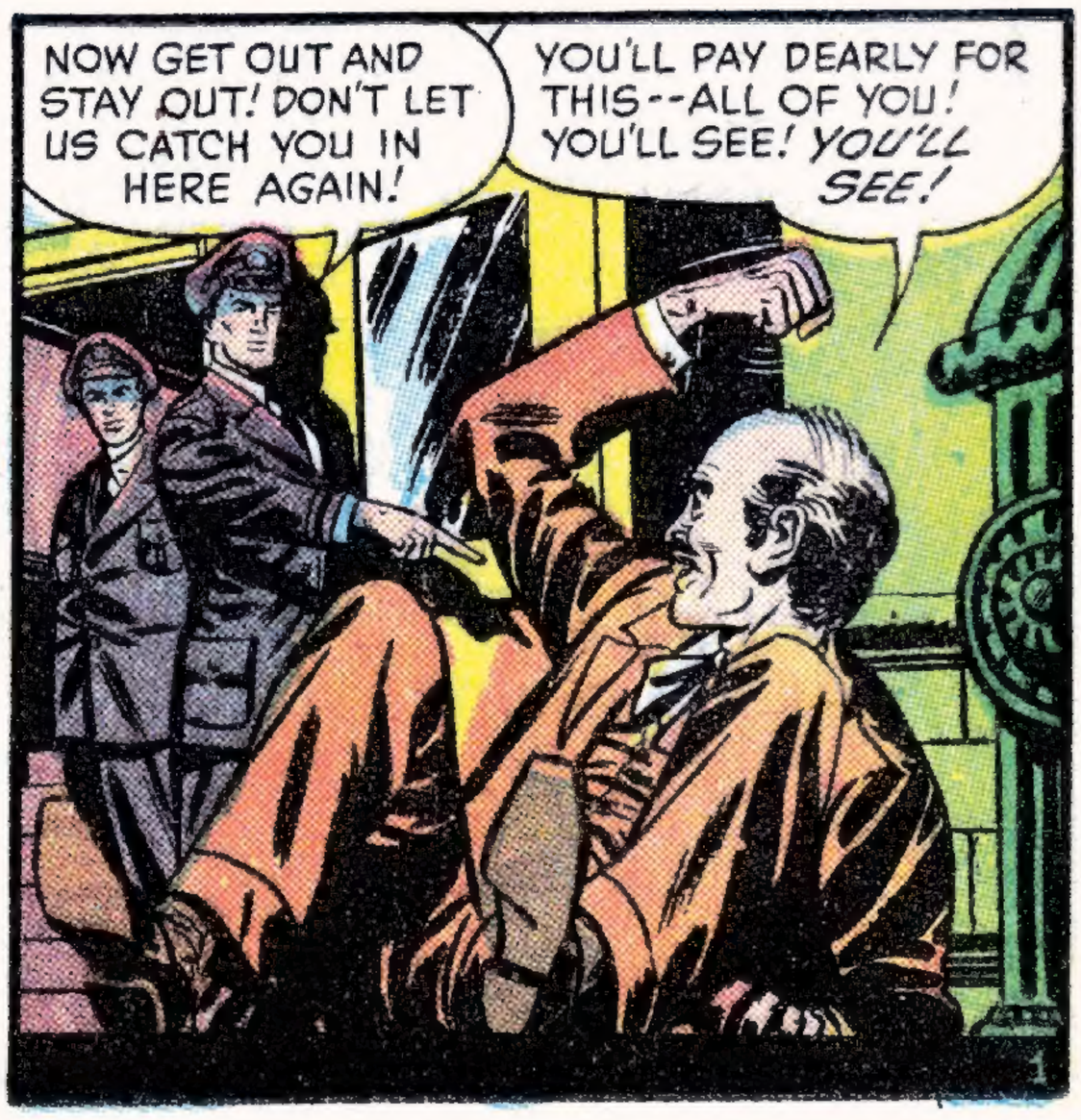
POOR HENRY, OLD LOOEL CAUSED HIM A TERRIBLE HEADACHE! WHEN HE LET ANNE DROWN, HE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN HE WAS HEADED FOR TROUBLE! HEH! HEH! HEH!

The End

THE WEB OF THE SPIDER

CRRRRKK--CRRRKK--CRRRRKK...SCREAM ALL YOU WANT, MY DEAR! NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU--EXCEPT I--AND I AM YOUR NEMESIS! HA-HA-HA--!
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

IT BEGAN USUALLY ENOUGH IN THE STREET NEAR THE SCIENCE BUILDING. THIS WAS PROF. HUGO DURANDO'S DOZENTH ATTEMPT TO CONVINCE THE LEARNED BODY OF SCIENTISTS THAT HIS THEORY WAS CORRECT...



Witches Tales #12, July 1952. Art: Joe Certa. Publisher: Harvey Comics.

BAH! THOSE FOOLS! I HAVEN'T TOUCHED THE MONEY MARTHA LEFT ME WHEN SHE DIED. I'LL SHOW THEM... I'LL CONDUCT THE EXPERIMENT MYSELF! THEN THEY'LL LISTEN.. YES, THAT'S IT!

SO HUGO DURANDO WENT TO HIS DECEASED WIFE'S BANK, WITHDREW THE ENTIRE SUM, AND STARTED THE CHAIN OF FANTASTIC EVENTS. FIRST, THERE WAS A SUITABLE LABORATORY TO BE BOUGHT, THEN CAME A TRUSTWORTHY ASSISTANT--AND FINALLY, APPARATUS NEEDED SETTING UP...

DAYS OF EXPERIMENTATION FOLLOWED... AND THEN *THE* DAY CAME WHEN DURANDO WAS READY!

OH, PROF...CAREFUL.. IT...IT MAY EXPLODE!

DON'T WORRY, MY DEAR! THIS IS WHAT I'VE WAITED FOR ALL THESE MONTHS!

HA, HA... IT'S A SUCCESS!

GURRRGLE

GURGLE

GURGLE

SPLASH

AND A FEW NIGHTS LATER, IN A LITTERED ALLEYWAY IN THE SLUMS, A MUFFLED FIGURE MOVED SILENTLY UP TO A SLEEPING TRAMP, AND...

IT WON'T HURT ANYMORE, MY FRIEND! THAT'S IT! SINK INTO THE SLEEP THAT WILL CHANGE YOU TO WHAT I DESIRE! SLEEP! SLEEP! HA-HA...

YAAA

RIPPING OFF HIS ARMOR, THE EXCITED SCIENTIST HELD UP THE SPARKLING BLUE LIQUID TO THE LIGHT.

THE WORLD CAN BENEFIT FROM THIS... SCIENCE CAN LEARN THE SECRET OF LIFE THROUGH A STUDY OF THIS TRANSFORMATION... BUT IT *SHALL NOT!* LAUGH AT ME, WILL THEY? NOW, WE'LL SEE!

SOMEHOW THIS LIQUID CHANGES MAN INTO SPIDER! GOOD! THEN THAT IS WHAT I SHALL BECOME TEMPORARILY TO ACCOMPLISH MY ENDS! GLUG...GLUG GLUG...TO SUCCESS!

THE LIQUID SEARED INTO HIS VITALS, CAUSING STRANGE HORMONAL IMBALANCES AND GLANDULAR SECRETIONS TO FLOW. WEIRDLY, OMINOUSLY, THE FLESH ON HIS BONES CHANGED COLOR AND SHAPE ...THE TRANSFORMATION HAD BEGUN!

OHHH...

UGHHH...GASP... M-MY THROAT... I--I CAN'T BREATHE...!

HANDS...FEET...BENDING QUEERLY...STRANGE HAIR...OTHER THINGS HAPPENING...I-I'M GETTING MORE BENT!

I...I CAN FEEL IT NOW...JUST A LITTLE MORE...A LITTLE MORE...

CRASH!

NOW! I CAN MOVE SWIFTLY AND SILENTLY! I'M ALL-POWERFUL! HA-HA...NOW I SHALL CALL ON MY ENEMIES! LET THEM SEE ME AS I REALLY AM!

THAT NEXT DAY, A SLITHERING HORROR THRUST ITS HUGE, BARBED PINCERS INTO THE OAK-PANELED INNER SANCTUM OF THE SCIENCE BUILDING.

AYYYYAAAHH! IT...IT'S GOT ME! *AAAGGHH!*

CRRRK... CRRK...

HELP!! HELP!!

CRRK..

HOLY SMOKE! TELL ME I'M DREAMING! KEEP FIRING AT IT! MAYBE IT'LL DIE!

NOTHING CAN KILL IT--NOTHING! YOUR BULLETS JUST BOUNCE OFF ITS HIDE! Y//////!

BANG!

BANG!

AND EACH SUCCEEDING DAY, DURANDO GREW BOLDER AND MORE CUNNING. FIRST, IT WAS HIS RIVALS HE HAD KILLED--NOW ROBBERIES AND OTHER CRIMES BEGAN. HE WANTED MONEY AND MORE MONEY! A PARALYZED CITY RECOILED IN FEAR!

DAILY EXPRESS

MONSTER STRIKES AGAIN!

HA, HA...WHO ARE THE FOOLS NOW? THEY THOUGHT MY EXPERIMENTS WERE INSANE! THEY LAUGHED AT ME! IT'S I WHO'S LAUGHING NOW! HA, HA, HA...

WHAT WAS THAT?

SQQQUUEEEAAK

SO--! YOU WERE SPYING ON ME, EH? I PAY YOU TO ASSIST, NOT TO SNOOP! GET IN HERE!

OHH--PLEASE-Y-YOU'RE HURTING ME! I--I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING! PLEASE--LET ME GO!

YOU'VE HEARD AND SEEN TOO MUCH! AND I CAN'T AFFORD MISTAKES!

NO! YA-A-A-A!

CRRK..

CRRRRRRK..

THE UNLUCKY GIRL LANDED ON THE SHIMMERING, DEADLY COBWEB THAT BENT UNDER HER WEIGHT, THEN SPRUNG BACK TO COMPLETELY ENMESH HER IN ITS STICKY, CABLE-LIKE STRANDS. SECONDS LATER, GLIDING MONSTROSITIES SWUNG SLOWLY DOWN TOWARDS HER...

OHHH..

CRRK

SUDDENLY, DURANDO, WHO HAD AGAIN TURNED INTO A SPIDER-BEAST FOR ANOTHER NIGHT'S FORAY, SCREAMED OUT A COMMAND!

STOP! I SHALL DISPOSE OF HER!

PLEASE--WHAT HAVE I EVER DONE TO YOU? N-NO--STAY AWAY!

EEEEEEE!

CRRRK

CRRRK

BUT DURANDO WAS DEAF TO HER PLEAS. AND JUST AS HE NEARED HIS VICTIM TO SINK TERRIBLY-FANGED JAWS INTO SOFT, YIELDING FLESH, A GHASTLY CHANGE OCCURRED!

UGHH--I--I'M TURNING BACK INTO HUMAN FORM! WHAT'S HAPPENING?

YOU'RE TURNING BACK INTO A MAN! YOUR OWN CHEMICAL ANTI-BODIES IN YOUR BODY MUST HAVE NULLIFIED THE EFFECT OF YOUR SERUM!

T-THEN--I--I CAN'T CHANGE ANYMORE! I'M *IMMUNE!* N-NO! IT'S A TERRIBLE MISTAKE!

CRRRK

CRRRK

IT'S NO MISTAKE! YOU'VE DOOMED YOURSELF! YOU'LL BE KILLED AND EATEN BY YOUR OWN CREATIONS! *HA-HA!*

NO! STAY AWAY! D-DON'T COME ANY NEARER! PLEASE--! I--I'M YOUR MASTER.

HA, HA... HOW FUNNY--! HA, HA...AH HA, HA, HA...

CRRRK

NO! NO! YAAAAAH!

CRRRK

CRRRK

CRRRK

THE END

EVERY-ONES LIFE IS MEASURED!! YES FATE AND DEATH KNOW THE MINUTES LEFT TO YOUR LIFE AND MINE.....STILL WHEN TOD GRESHAM DRAGGED HIMSELF PAINFULLY TO THE LITTLE WHITE HOUSE LOOKING FOR HELP, HE WAS HORRIFIED TO FIND THE BODY OF HIS FRIEND, HARRY BAYNE, DANGLING FROM A HANGMAN'S NOOSE.. .....AND MARA HIS SWEETHEART, BECKONING TO HIM. YES, THE TIME HAD COME, HOW?.....WHY?.....HE WONDERED IN TERROR. BUT, NOT FOR LONG.....NOT FOR LONG.....

IF THE NOOSE FITS-WEAR IT!

DON'T BE AFRAID, THE NOOSE WILL FIT NOW!!

YES, IT IS TRUE! YOU ARE DEATH!!

ON A VISIT TO GARRETT'S WAX-WORKS MUSEUM, HARRY BAYNE WAS STRUCK BY THE HANGING WITCH ON THE HANGMAN'S NOOSE, WHILE TOD GRESHAM'S EYE WAS CAUGHT BY THE BEAUTY OF A STRANGE GIRL....

TOD-LOOK-THIS IS QUITE INTERESTING- THE BODY WAS JUST EXHUMED A WEEK AGO....

THAT GIRL IN THIS PLACE, HOW BEAUTIFUL SHE IS.

WON'T YOU TELL US THE STORY OF THIS FIGURE?.. MR. GARRETT!

YES, GENTLE-MEN, THERE'S A FASCINATING STORY CONCERNING THIS FIGURE-

ABOUT THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO IN A SMALL VILLAGE, ELSA THE BEAU-TIFUL DAUGHTER OF A RICH MAN DISAPPEARED....

Dark Mysteries #6, April – May 1952. Art attributed to Tony Tallarico. Publisher: Master Comics.

ELSA AND HER FRIEND HAD BEEN WALKING THROU- — GH THE WOODS-WHEN SUDDENLY AN OLD CRONE OF THE VILLAGE, JENNY HARRIS, APPEARED WAVING A STICK AT THEM. ELSA, HER RED HAIR FLOWING DOWN HER BACK, IMMEDIATELY DISAPPEARED. INSTEAD, WHERE SHE WAS, HER FRIEND KAREN SAW ONLY A RED FOX.

HELP, HELP! JENNY'S DONE EVIL TO ELSA- SHE'S BEWITCHED HER....

STUPID GIRL! WISH I **COULD** BE- WITCH YOU AND ALL THOSE VILLAGERS....

AND THIS COURT DECREES THAT JENNY HARRIS, FOR UN- LAWFULLY PRACTICING WITCHCRAFT AND CAUSING THE DIS- APPEARANCE OF ELSA VENNING--SHALL THIS DAY HANG BY THE HANGMANS NOOSE AS DECREED FOR WITCHES...

EEEEH... AIEEEE...

AND SO THE WITCH WAS HUNG THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO. WE NOW HAVE THIS BODY, RECENTLY EXHUMED, WITH THE ORIGINAL HANGMANS NOOSE....

OF COURSE LATER KAREN WAS FOUND!!

WE NOW SELL MINIATURE NOOSES MADE OF THE ORIGINAL ROPE TO COLLECTORS OF CURIOS...

WE WOULD LOVE THEM!

NO-NO DO NOT BUY THEM! FORGIVE ME FOR INTERFERING BUT THEY BELONG TO THE DEAD.

BOTH TOD AND HARRY LAUGH ED AT THE SHOCKED YOUNG LADY AND BOUGHT THE GRISLY SOUVENIOR NOOSES.....TOD BECAME FRIENDLY WITH THE GIRL AND ASKED TO TAKE HER HOME.

CALL YOU TOMORROW, TOD!

RIGHTO, HARRY! I'M DELIGHTED YOU SPOKE TO US MISS.

I COULDN'T HELP MYSELF... TOD. MY NAME IS **MARA**.

BUT WHY WERE YOU AFRAID OF THE LITTLE NOOSES, MARA?

THINGS WHICH BELONG TO THOSE WHO DIE BEFORE THEIR TIME SHOULD NOT BE DISTURBED. THEY CAN ONLY BRING MISFORTUNE.

BUT THAT'S ONLY A SUPERSTITION AND I DON'T BELIEVE IN THEM.

THIS WAS MY LUCKY DAY, MARA. WHEN WILL I SEE YOU AGAIN? TOMORROW?

I WILL LET YOU KNOW-TOD. IT WILL BE SOON.

HOW ICY HER LIPS! WAIT TILL I KNOW HER LONGER!

YOU'RE A FASCINATING GIRL, MARA. MAY I COME IN?

NOT THIS TIME, TOD.

BUT MARA, I CAN'T LET YOU GO. I MUST SEE YOU-SOON-YOU CAN PICK THE TIME!

IF YOU INSIST, IN A WEEK... THEN.

YOU'RE MY LUCKY PIECE, LITTLE NOOSE. THROUGH YOU I MET MARA. GOOD NIGHT.....

THE NEXT MORNING TOD SAT BOLT UPRIGHT AS HIS EYES FELL ON THE NOOSE!!

WHAT-WHAT THE DICKENS! I MUST BE DREAMING THAT NOOSE LOOKS LARGER!

I'LL PUT THIS BOOK NEXT TO IT AS A MEASUREMENT.

THAT NIGHT WHEN HE RETURNED HOME. THE NOOSE HAD UNMISTAKABLY GROWN LARGER.

OH, NO! IT CAN'T BE— OR AM I STILL IMAGINING!!

TOD CALLED HARRY....

I DIDN'T LOOK AT MINE. IT MUST JUST BE A TRICK!!

I MUST BE WRONG, HARRY....GETTING SUPERSTITOUS I GUESS!

LET ME GET YOU OUT OF SIGHT.... IT'S MARA I WANT TO THINK OF ANY WAY!

THE NEXT WEEK MARA FAILED TO KEEP HER PROMISED DATE. AND WHEN TOD CALLED FOR HER....

NO, MISS LESTER IS NOT IN!!

THAT'S ODD, I HAD A DATE WITH HER.

BUT MISS LESTER ALWAYS KEEPS HER APPOINTMENTS AND ON TIME TOO. YOU MUST BE MISTAKEN!

MAYBE I DO HAVE THE WRONG TIME!

THAT NIGHT, WHEN HE REACHED HOME, TOD FELT IMPELLED TO LOOK AT THE NOOSE...

I'LL LOOK AT IT AGAIN, AT LEAST IT WILL REMIND ME OF MARA- OH NO! NO! WHAT'S THAT?

GREAT GUNS! I'M NOT DREAMING NOW.....

THE KNOT NOW HAD A MEDALLION!!

TOD GRESHAM OCTOBER 15, 1947

HARRY, I'M PANICKY NOW. YES? YOURS IS LARGER TOO? AND HAS YOUR NAME ON IT? LET'S GET AWAY... EVEN IF IT IS ONLY A TRICK.

I LEFT THE THING IN MY ROOM....

I DID TOO - IT'S STILL ON THE HOOK IN MY CLOSET.... WH'.... WHAT'S THAT? A BLOWOUT!!

THEN AS TOD REPAIRED THE TIRE, SOMETHING MADE HIM LOOK UP - HE SAW A CAR SUDDENLY SWISH BY, KNOCKING HARRY BACKWARD OVER THE EDGE OF THE STEEP CLIFF....

WHAT... HARRY... GOOD LORD.. THAT CAR HIT HIM!

HELP... ARRGHHH...

HE'S CRUSHED TO DEATH! I MUST GET HELP.

IN PANIC, TOD SPED AWAY IN THE CAR - FOR HELP, HIS NERVES UN-STRUNG BY HIS FRIENDS WEIRD DEATH...

NOW WHAT? OH NO NOT OUT OF GAS!

CHUG CHUG SPUT- SPUTTER

ONE GOOD OMEN, ANYWAY....A HOUSE! I'LL ASK TO USE THEIR PHONE FOR GAS...AND HELP!

E-12-7

TOD'S NERVOUS TENSION MOUNTED HIGHER AND HIGHER, THEN HE STUMBLED....

OOOOOH! MY ANKLE.

HIS ANKLE INJURED-IN GREAT AGONY TOD DRAGGED HIMGELF DESPERATELY TOWARD THE HOUSE.

I MUST MAKE THAT HOUSE. I MUST GET HELP. OOOOH!

COME IN TOD. I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU....

MARA DARLING...YOU! HOW DID YOU GET HERE! I TRIED TO REACH YOU BEFORE I LEFT...OOOH MY ANKLE!

MARA-CALL A DOCTOR AT ONCE. I THINK MY ANKLE IS BROKEN.

DON'T WORRY, TOD. THE PAIN WILL BE OVER SOON.

COME WITH ME, TOD. I'LL MAKE YOU COMFORTABLE!!

BUT-ALL-THESE-STAIRS....WHERE?....

THIS WAY-TOD. IN HERE.

BUT-THAT'S -MY FRIEND -HARRY! AND THE HANGMAN'S NOOSE....

I-I LEFT-HARRY'S BODY AT THE BOTTOM OF A RA-VINE. WE LEFT THE NOOSES IN OUR ROOMS....MARA, MARA...WHO-ARE-YOU?

I WILL BRING YOU EASE FROM PAIN....COME INTO MY ARMS...

UGH...LET GO OF ME..I MUST GET AWAY FROM YOU...

YOU CAN'T GET AWAY-TOD!! IT'S TIME FOR OUR DATE NOW.

YOU'RE EVIL-YOU BRING DEATH...AND I LOVED YOU. MY NOOSE! IT'S HERE TOO...

TOD TRIED TO RUSH FROM THE ROOM TO ESCAPE MARA ONLY TO FIND THE NOOSE SLIP AROUND HIS HEAD AND TIGHTEN IT'S GRIP AROUND HIS THROAT..AS THOUGH IT WERE ALIVE!

ARRGH

IT WON'T HURT TOD. IT'S TIME FOR OUR DATE. SEE, IT FITS!!

I-TOLD-YOU-I'D-BRING-YOU-PEACE...

THE END

THIS STORY COMES FROM THE BACKWOODS COUNTRY OF THE GREAT SMOKIES, WHERE THE MOUNTAIN FOLK SAY THAT IF A CAT JUMPS OVER A CORPSE, THE DEAD PERSON WILL BECOME A **VAMPIRE!** JUST A **SUPERSTITION**, YOU SAY? WELL, THIS IS WHAT **HAPPENED** WHEN ...

The CAT JUMPED over the CORPSE

JOHN HALE AND HIS BRIDE, **MARIA**, HAD GONE TO THE MOUNTAINS FOR A COMBINED HONEYMOON AND HUNTING TRIP! ON THEIR FIRST DAY OUT ...

WONDERFUL COUNTRY, ISN'T IT?

YES, DEAR ... BUT UNDERNEATH THE BEAUTY THERE'S SOMETHING ... ***SINISTER!***

TAKE **ROWAN**, OUR GUIDE ... THERE'S SOMETHING **STRANGE** ABOUT HIM!

NONSENSE, MARIA! HE'S A FINE FELLOW! YOU JUST AREN'T USED TO THESE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE!

SUDDENLY ...

GOOD HEAVENS!

CR-RACK!

BOOOOOOOOM!

Out of The Night #16, August – September 1954. Art: Lin Streeter. Publisher: ACG.

IT'S **GRANNY** AGAIN---MAKIN' WEATHER TO DRIVE YOU **FURRINERS** OUT OF THE HILLS! I'M LOSIN' ALL MY BUSINESS 'CAUSE O' HER!

CR-RACK!

WE BETTER HEAD FOR HER CABIN THERE AN' **STOP** HER!

BUT AS THEY OPENED THE CABIN DOOR---

OH-HH!

BACK, YOU BLACK DEVIL--- **BACK!**

PFSSSSSST!

IT'S JUST MY CAT---NOTHIN' TO BE AFEARED OF! COME HERE, MY PET! HEH, HEH!

YOU'VE BEEN MAKIN' WEATHER AGAIN, GRANNY! YOU KNEW I WAS TAKIN' THE LADY AN' GENTLE-MAN HUNTIN'!

YOU **LIE!** MY OWN GRANDSON, AND YOU LIE!

YOU KEEP AWAY FROM GRANNY, ROWAN!

SO IT'S **YOU** AGAIN, IS IT?

THIS IS MY SISTER, **KATIE** ---AND A WILD ONE SHE IS!

SO YOU'RE THE CITY FOLK, EH? HOWDY!

HELLO!

I GOT A FEELIN' WE'LL BE SEEIN' **MORE** OF EACH OTHER--- **LOTS** MORE!

I---ER---I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG WE'LL BE HERE---

BUT MARIA HAD SEEN THE POSSESSIVE GLEAM IN KATIE'S EYES AS SHE STARED AT JOHN···

COME, JOHN! WE'D BETTER BE GOING!

WE'LL MEET AGAIN··· JOHNNY!

THAT NIGHT, IN THEIR CABIN··

PLEASE, JOHN ···LET'S LEAVE THIS PLACE··· NOW! I DON'T LIKE IT!

OKAY, HONEY··· IF IT BOTHERS YOU WE'LL LEAVE IN THE MORNING!

BUT, IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT···

THAT VOICE··· SO UNEARTHLY ···CALLING ME! I-I MUST FOLLOW IT! I CAN'T··· RESIST···

MA··RI-AAAAAA···

AS THE HYPNOTIC WAIL GREW LOUDER···

MAAAA-RIIIIIIII-AAAAAA

MA··RI···AAAAA

GRANNY SAID THE CALL OF THE OWL WOULD FETCH YOU! YOU'RE GOING TO DIE NOW···AND YOUR MAN WILL BELONG TO ME!

SUDDENLY, SOMETHING SNAPPED IN MARIA··· BRINGING HER BACK TO REALITY! THEN··· WITH A SUDDEN LUNGE···

NO YOU DON'T! GIVE ME THAT RIFLE!

YOU DEVIL! YOU'RE GONNA DIE!

I'LL KILL YOU! I'LL··· AAAGH!

CRACK!

OHH! SHE··· SHE'S DEAD!

THAT SHOT! WHAT HAPPENED?

OH, JOHN···SHE TRIED TO **KILL** ME! WE STRUGGLED···AND THE GUN WENT OFF ACCIDENTALLY!

I KNEW SHE'D COME TO A BAD END!

LOOK! GRANNY'S CAT! IT'S JUMPIN' OVER HER!

NOW SHE'LL BECOME A **VAMPIRE!** SHE CAN'T BE BURIED UNTIL THE CAT IS FOUND AND **KILLED!**

NONSENSE, ROWAN! THAT'S JUST **SUPER-STITION!**

AFTER CARRYING THE BODY TO GRANNY'S CABIN, JOHN AND MARIA RETURNED TO THEIR CABIN···

LET'S **LEAVE** JOHN···THIS INSTANT!

WE CAN'T TRAVEL THESE ROADS TILL DAYLIGHT··· SO WE'D BETTER GET SOME SLEEP!

BUT SLEEP WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR MARIA! HOURS LATER SHE HEARD THE THROB OF MIGHTY WINGS, BEATING, BEATING···

A HUGE BAT···FLYING TOWARD OUR CABIN!

THEN, WITH A RUSH OF HORROR···

I HAVE COME FOR JOHNNY···HE MUST JOIN ME!

NO-NO! IT CAN'T BE!

JOHN! JOHN! HELP! WAKE UP!

WHAT THE···? GREAT SCOTT!

SO BE IT···FOR NOW! BUT MY TURN WILL COME!

IT'S···IT'S FLYING OFF!

THANK HEAVEN!

NOW WE CAN'T LEAVE ···UNTIL WE KILL THE CAT···OR THE VAMPIRE WILL BE BACK, WHEREVER WE ARE!

YOU'RE RIGHT! TOMORROW THAT CAT DIES!

NEXT DAY···

GRANNY'S CAT DIDN'T COME BACK! WE'LL HAVE TO TRACK IT THROUGH THE WOODS!

LET'S GO!

ALL DAY THE FRUITLESS HUNT WENT ON! THEN, AS NIGHT FELL···

THERE IT IS!

DON'T LET IT GET AWAY!

IT RAN INTO THAT CAVE··· WE'LL **NEVER** FIND IT!

WE MUST! WE CAN'T LET IT ESCAPE NOW! **LET'S GO IN!**

WITHIN THE DARK AND FORBIDDING CAVE, SUDDENLY···

LOOK OUT! IT'S THE VAMPIRE!

SHE'S GOT HIM! WE'RE HELPLESS··· BULLETS CAN'T STOP HER!

TAKING CAREFUL AIM, MARIA RAISED HER RIFLE···

AWREEEEEEEE!

CR-RACK!

AND AS THE AGONIZED SHRIEK OF THE CAT DIED AWAY···

YAAAGH!

LOOK! THE VAMPIRE'S DISSOLVING INTO SMOKE!

OH, JOHN, **JOHN!** ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

YES··· I'M SAFE NOW···THANKS TO **YOU,** DARLING!

AND SO THEY BURIED KATE, THE WILD MOUNTAIN GIRL! NOW MARIA AND JOHN COULD SAFELY LEAVE THE STRANGE HILL COUNTRY···BUT ALWAYS THEY WOULD REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED WHEN··· **THE CAT JUMPED OVER THE CORPSE!**

THE END

JEALOUSY STIRS A MAN TO COMMIT EVIL, AND PETE MARDEN WAS DRIVEN TO DESTROY HIS BEST FRIEND IN THE DISTANT JUNGLES OF PERU! HE WENT UNPUNISHED FOR HIS CRIME, BUT NEVER RECKONED WITH THE VENGEANCE OF...

the THING from the DARK

THIS ISN'T FAIR TO PETE, ANITA! YOU KNOW HE'S IN LOVE WITH YOU!

WHAT DO I CARE ABOUT HIM? KISS ME, LARRY!

SO THAT'S IT! I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN! HE'S TRYING TO STEAL HER FROM ME!

B-1736

THE CAMP SITE OF AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL EXPEDITION IN PERU, WHICH IS SEARCHING THROUGH INCAN RUINS...

YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL, ANITA! I NEVER DREAMED WHEN PETE AND I HIRED YOU AS OUR SECRETARY ON THIS TRIP THAT I'D FALL IN LOVE WITH YOU--PETE'S GIRL!

IT HAPPENED BECAUSE I WANTED IT THIS WAY!

THAT KISS JUST SEALED YOUR DEATH WARRANT, LARRY!

The Unseen #12, November 1954. Art: George Roussos. Publisher: Pines.

THE NEXT DAY, AS PETE AND LARRY EXPLORE THE EERIE TOMB OF AN ANCIENT INCA CHIEFTAN...

I WONDER WHERE THAT TUNNEL LEADS, PETE! I'M GOING IN!

OKAY! I'LL BE RIGHT BEHIND YOU!

AS LARRY ENTERS THE TUNNEL, PETE DISLODGES A HUGE ROCK, CAUSING A LANDSLIDE!

THAT DOES IT! NOW YOU WON'T STEAL MY GIRL! THINK ABOUT IT WHILE YOU'RE SEALED UP FOR ETERNITY!

LATER...AT THE CAMP SITE...

WE CANNOT DIG FURTHER! WE FEAR A CAVE-IN!

WE CAN DO NO MORE, ANITA! POOR LARRY!

OH, HOW HORRIBLE! HE'S BEEN BURIED ALIVE!

YES--TOO BAD! I KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON BETWEEN YOU AND LARRY! THAT'S WHY THIS ACCIDENT HAPPENED!

PETE! YOU MEAN THAT YOU --!?

EXACTLY! DO YOU THINK I'D LET HIM STEAL YOU? I LOVE YOU TOO MUCH FOR THAT!

I WAS ONLY LEADING HIM ON! IT'S BEEN YOU ALL THE TIME!

YOU BETTER MEAN THAT! WE'RE GOING BACK TO THE STATES NOW-- AND WE'LL BE MARRIED!

THAT'S WHAT I WANT! WE CAN FORGET LARRY! HE'S GONE FOREVER!

MEANWHILE, IN THE CAVE OF THE INCAS...

THERE MUST BE A WAY OUT-- THERE HAS TO BE!

FOR HOURS--DAYS, LARRY TRIES TO CLAW HIS WAY TO FREEDOM, BUT...

USELESS! I'M TRAPPED! CAN'T STAY HERE! MUST FIND... FOOD... WATER...

FOLLOWING THE TUNNEL, LARRY FINDS AN UNDERGROUND RIVER LINED BY MONSTROUS, BUT EDIBLE VEGETATION! AND THUS, HE TAKES UP HIS SUBTERRANEAN LIFE, VAINLY SEEKING AN EXIT...

AS THE MONTHS PASS, HE ASSUMES A BESTIAL, INHUMAN APPEARANCE, LIKE A HUGE MOLE...

I REMEMBER... SUN... WARM... WANT TO BE WARM! BLOOD IS WARM! MUST HAVE BLOOD!

THEN, AFTER ENDLESS WANDERING IN THE DARK, MORE BEAST THAN HUMAN...

LIGHT! LIGHT! BLOOD! WARMTH!

AND, AT LAST...

I'M FREE!

MY BLOOD HAS TURNED COLD! PEOPLE HAVE WARM BLOOD! I'LL KILL AND KILL AND KILL! THEY SHALL PAY FOR MY SUFFERING!

HIS MIND, SNAPPED BY HIS TERRIBLE ORDEAL, LARRY BECOMES A PREYING KILLER, WANTONLY DESTROYING PEOPLE IN HIS MAD FIGHT TO STAY ALIVE!

BLOOD!

MEANWHILE, PETE AND HIS WIFE, LECTURING IN A UNIVERSITY OF LIMA, RECEIVE A VISITOR IN THEIR HOTEL SUITE...

SENOR MARDEN, AS CHIEF OF SECURITY, I ASK YOU A FAVOR! NO DOUBT YOU HAVE HEARD OF THE MONSTER?

YES! SOME STRANGE HALF-BEAST WHO KILLS WANTONLY! WHAT HAS THIS TO DO WITH ME?

WITH YOUR ANTHROPOLOGICAL BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE IN THE REGION WHERE THE MONSTER IS REPORTED, YOU WOULD BE INVALUABLE IN OUR HUNT FOR IT!

WILL YOU HELP US?

HMM! WELL... ALL RIGHT! MY WIFE WILL JOIN US! THIS MAY PROVE QUITE EN-LIGHTENING!

SEVERAL DAYS LATER...

PETE... THIS IS NEAR WHERE LARRY WAS...

I KNOW! I KNOW! KEEP QUIET!

I THINK ABOUT HIM OFTEN! IT'S FIVE YEARS NOW!

I SAID, SHUT UP! STOP TALKING ABOUT THAT!

SENOR... ANOTHER KILLING! THE MONSTER WAS SEEN IN THE VILLAGE OF LOS SANTOS! WE MUST GO THERE QUICKLY!

IN LOS SANTOS, AT THE SCENE OF THE LATEST ATROCITY...

MY MEN ARE COMBING THE JUNGLE!

I'LL HELP ALL I CAN!

IT'S HORRIBLE! THAT POOR GIRL!

YOU WILL PROCEED TO OUR ADVANCE CAMP! PERHAPS, SENOR, WE'LL GET HIM TONIGHT!

I HOPE SO! IT WILL BE AN ABSORBING STUDY! UNDOUBTEDLY, HE IS A THROWBACK TO PREHISTORIC TIMES!

AND NOT FAR AWAY, IN THE DARK JUNGLE, THE HUNTED THING WAITS...

THEY ARE COMING CLOSER ALL THE TIME! I MUST HIDE!

AN HOUR BEFORE MIDNIGHT...

THE MAN AND THE WOMAN-- I HAVE SEEN THEM BEFORE! WHO ARE THEY?

WE WILL WAIT HERE FOR THE CHIEF, SENOR!

VERY GOOD! WHAT'S WRONG, ANITA?

I-- I DON'T KNOW! I FEEL SOMETHING TERRIBLE IS GOING TO HAPPEN!

YOU'RE JUST JUMPY! NOTHING WILL HAPPEN! WE'RE PERFECTLY SAFE!

YES... GUESS I'M TIRED! THERE'S A STREAM DOWN THE TRAIL! I'LL FEEL BETTER AFTER A SWIM! WANT TO COME ALONG?

NO, I'LL WAIT FOR THE CHIEF! IF YOU SEE ANYTHING, JUST YELL!

I WILL!

SOON...

I'M TERRIBLY AFRAID! SOMETHING'S HERE... I MUST GO BACK...

REMEMBER... ANITA...

L-LARRY GRAHAM! YAAAAAAH!

THE SCREAM CAME FROM HERE... ANITA!

IN THERE! I HEAR IT THRASHING ABOUT!

PETE MARDEN, TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT ME! YOUR LAST LOOK...

LARRY! NO! NO!

YAAAAAAAAAH!

DON'T LET IT GET AWAY!

HA HA HA HA HA HA!

HE WON'T GET FAR! I THINK I HIT HIM!

BUT WHEN THE POLICE FOLLOWED THE TRAIL OF BLOOD LEFT BY THE WOUNDED LARRY, THEY FOUND..

HE BURROWED INTO THE GROUND LIKE A MOLE! WE WILL NEVER FIND HIM NOW-- OR KNOW WHAT HE REALLY WAS!

HA HA HA HA!

THE END

Valley of the Scaly Monsters

IT WAS NEITHER MAN NOR BEAST, BUT A SPAWN OF EVIL, THE LIKES OF WHICH HAD NEVER BEFORE BEEN SEEN ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH. THEY WERE ONLY TWO MEN AND A GIRL AGAINST THE MENACING DANGERS OF THE STEAMING AMAZON JUNGLE, BUT THE THREAT THEY FACED WAS NOT OF FANG OR CLAW, BUT A NAMELESS HORROR WHOSE EVIL SOURCE SPRANG FROM THE SLIMY DEPTHS OF A HIDDEN VALLEY.

YOU DRINK NOW!

NO! I WON'T! I WON'T!

ON A SWELTERING, HUMID EVENING, DEEP IN THE INTERIOR OF THE AMAZON JUNGLE, A SMALL SCIENTIFIC PARTY HEADED BY PROFESSOR BYRON CHALMERS WAS INTERRUPTED BY THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF A NATIVE TRIBESMAN...

IT STRIKE AGAIN, MASTER. WE WERE TWO ALONE IN JUNGLE WHEN MAN-BEAST COME. I SEE IT WITH OWN EYES!

WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT, DAD?

THERE'S NOTHING TO BECOME ALARMED ABOUT, DIANE. THE NATIVES IN THE REGION CLAIM THE EXISTENCE OF A MONSTER TYPE THAT IS SUPPOSEDLY PART HUMAN AND PART LIZARD. IT'S NOTHING BUT SUPERSTITIOUS NONSENSE!

The Beyond #2, January 1951. Artist unknown. Publisher: Ace Magazines.

IT *TRUE!* NOT MANY HOURS PAST, MALIBO AND FRIEND HUNT IN JUNGLE FOR FOOD. WHEN COME TO GREAT WATER, I FIRST, FRIEND BEHIND...

"... AT FIRST ALL IS QUIET. NO SOUND BUT THOSE OF FEET..."

"... THEN I HEAR..."

YA-AA-AA!

MALIBO ALONE ESCAPE, BUT FRIEND DO NOT DIE. ONE, TWO MOON FROM NOW, HE, TOO, BECOME MAN-BEAST, LIKE OTHERS. THIS I KNOW. THIS HAPPEN MANY TIME BEFORE!

ALL RIGHT, MALIBO...

...LEAVE THIS TENT AT ONCE!

MALIBO GO, BUT GIVE WARNING. YOUR FIRE-STICK NOT STRONGER THAN MAN-BEAST EVIL!

WHAT DO YOU REALLY THINK OF IT, SIR?

NOTHING BUT HYSTERIA AND HALLUCINATION, ROY. IN MANY RESPECTS THEY'RE LIKE CHILDREN. THEIR WORLD OF REALITY IS OFTEN PENETRATED BY FANTASY, BORN OUT OF SUPERSTITION AND FEAR. FORGET IT AND GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP; LOTS OF WORK FOR ALL OF US IN THE MORNING.

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, THE THREE AMERICANS TOOK VARIOUS POSITIONS ALONG THE RIVER'S EDGE, EACH OF THEM SEARCHING THE SLUGGISH WATERS FOR THE TINY ANIMAL AND PLANT FORMS TO BE ADDED TO THEIR COLLECTION...

I KNOW I'M ACTING FOOLISH, BUT I CAN'T HELP FEELING NERVOUS ABOUT WHAT THAT NATIVE SAID. I KNOW IT'S IMPOSSIBLE, YET...

BUT AT THE SAME TIME, AS THE UNSUSPECTING GIRL WENT ABOUT HER TASK, THERE WAS A SLIGHT MOVEMENT BEHIND HER. SLOWLY, THE DENSE FOLIAGE BENT FORWARD, AND TWO PAIRS OF HIDEOUS EYES PEERED OUT FROM BENEATH SCALY BROWS...

SLOWLY, THE SECONDS TICKED BY, AND WHEN THE GIRL RAISED HER FLASK FROM THE RIVER...

THIS SHOULD DO IT! NOW IF... WAIT! THAT SOUND...

SWIFTLY, THE SCREAM OF TERROR CHOKED INTO A WAILING SOB THAT BUBBLED FITFULLY ON THE GIRL'S LIPS, AND THEN FINALLY ENDED IN BLESSED OBLIVION...

LUNGING FORWARD, THE BRUTISH FORMS STREAKED THROUGH A SECRET JUNGLE PATH, WHICH FINALLY EMERGED INTO A VALLEY WHOSE FLOOR WAS STRANGELY POCK-MARKED BY JAGGED CRATERS. WITH A HISSING SOUND THROUGH FORKED TONGUES, THEY STOPPED AT ONE OF THE LARGER FISSURES...

GALIKI! MATOMIPO, AGUNZO!

SWIFT ARMS CARRIED HER INTO THE LOWER REGIONS OF A SUBTERRANEAN CAVE, WHERE THE UNCONSCIOUS FORM WAS PLACED ON A ROCKY DAIS. GROTESQUE SHADOWS FLICKERED OMINOUSLY IN THE SHIFTING FLAMES OF NUMEROUS TORCHES AS THE GIRL STRUGGLED UPWARD OUT OF A WELL OF DARKNESS...

YOU DRINK... THIS!

NO! NO!

GALIKI! GALIKI!

YOU *DRINK!* SOON YOU BE OUR *QUEEN!* YOU RULE—WE OBEY!

AGUNZO!

HOURS LATER, WHEN A FLAMING SUN SANK BEHIND THE BLACK-RIMMED HILLS, THE GIRL UNACCOUNTABLY FOUND HERSELF STANDING AT THE EXIT OF A NARROW MOUNTAIN GORGE...

IT'S ALREADY NIGHT! W-WHERE HAVE I BEEN ALL THESE HOURS? I-I'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO CAMP—AT ONCE!

WALKING AS THOUGH IN A DREAM, THE GIRL PICKED OUT FAMILIAR LANDMARKS ALONG THE TRAIL, AND AFTER A WEARY TREK, STAGGERED INTO CAMP...

DIANE! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

WE HAD A SEARCH PARTY OUT ALL AFTERNOON! WE'VE BEEN FRANTIC WITH WORRY! WHAT HAPPENED, DARLING?

I... IT'S ALL RIGHT, ROY!

I WANDERED OFF THE TRAIL... COULDN'T FIND MY WAY BACK FOR HOURS! I'LL BE ALL RIGHT—JUST NEED SOME REST! TERRIBLY TIRED—NEED SOME SLEEP!

THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG, SIR. I'VE NEVER SEEN DIANE WITH THAT KIND OF LOOK BEFORE. IT WAS AS THOUGH SHE WERE LOOKING THROUGH ME. AS IF I DIDN'T EXIST!

LET'S NOT JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS. IT MIGHT VERY WELL BE FATIGUE. GIVE HER A CHANCE TO SLEEP IT OFF.

AS THE LONG JUNGLE NIGHT DRAGGED ON, A STRANGE APATHY SETTLED ACROSS THE GIRL'S MIND...

SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED TO ME, AND I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT! I FEEL SO EXHAUSTED AND YET I'M AFRAID TO SLEEP. AFRAID THAT SOMETHING AWFUL WILL HAPPEN. BUT I CAN'T FIGHT IT... I'M SO TIRED... SO VERY TIRED...

SLOWLY THE WEARY MIND GAVE WAY TO BODILY EXHAUSTION, AND AS SLEEP DREW THE HEAVY LIDS ACROSS THE STARING EYES, THE STILL AIR OF THE TENT SUDDENLY PULSATED WITH A STRANGE AND GLOWING LIGHT. FITFULLY, THE PHOSPHORESCENT GLOW TOOK SHAPE AND FORM, AS AN UNHOLY TRANSMIGRATION TOOK PLACE ABOVE THE SLEEPING GIRL...

As the body of the girl continued to lie upon its cot in a death-like coma, its strange and glowing counterpart took a lonely jungle trail and soon appeared at the familiar mountain pass...

...and then wended its way into the foreboding valley...

SEE... spirit form comes back! Prepare drink and animal skin!

GALIKI! GALIKI! AGUNZO, GALIKI!

Upon re-entering the subterranean cave, the spectral image mysteriously took on form and substance. Now clothed in a scaly garment, a sinister look swept over the girl's features as she raised the steaming brew to her lips...

Soon I shall be with you always — to become your **QUEEN** and to rule over you and all the jungle!

Now you return to camp in spirit form like you come, but each night you return here for drink that soon change you forever into queen.

I understand, and will do all of it exactly!

Each night, for two consecutive weeks, the girl's disembodied spirit returned to the hidden valley, where the loathsome ritual was repeated amidst the animal cries of the hideous horde! Then one morning, in camp...

Diane, I've been meaning to speak to you for some time!

Not now, Roy I couldn't stand any questioning. Please let me alone!

Ever since she wandered off that day, she hasn't been the same girl. I've checked her tent these past few nights, but she seems to sleep soundly enough. I just **can't** understand her behavior.

Neither can I, sir, but I intend to find out!

That night, as the camp slept, the determined young man took his position in the dense foliage not far from the girl's tent the hours dragged by, and then...

Great Scott! I-it can't be!

UNOBSERVED, THE YOUNG MAN FOLLOWED THE SPECTRAL FORM THROUGH THE MAZE OF JUNGLE, SEEING, BUT NOT TRULY BELIEVING, PLODDING FORWARD STEP BY STEP, UNTIL THE TRAIL ENDED AT THE MOUNTAIN GORGE...

THE SPECTRE IS HEADED FOR THAT VALLEY! I MUSTN'T LOSE SIGHT OF IT!

WHATEVER THAT THING WAS, IT WENT DOWN HERE. SOMEHOW, IT TIES UP WITH DIANE. THERE'S ONLY *ONE* WAY TO FIND OUT, AND THAT'S TO GO AFTER IT!

MOMENTS LATER...

TONIGHT YOU BECOME *QUEEN!* WHEN YOU DRINK NOW, BODY IN CAMP WILL DIE, BUT *YOU* WILL REMAIN HERE... TO RULE OVER ALL JUNGLE!

MERCIFUL HEAVENS! WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO HER?

STOP! DON'T DRINK IT!

SEIZE HIM! DON'T LET HIM GET AWAY!

WHATEVER THEY'VE DONE TO HER, SHE'S TURNED AGAINST ME! BUT I CAN'T STOP NOW. GOT TO STALL FOR TIME... THIS TORCH...

THIS WILL DO IT!

AIIIIII!

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THEIR MOMENTARY CONFUSION, ROY SEIZED THE RESISTING GIRL, AND...

IF I CAN BEAT THEM THROUGH THE PASS, I MIGHT STAND A CHANCE! GOT TO TRY IT!

ONCE OUT OF THE FORBIDDEN VALLEY, THE GIRL BROKE FROM HIS ARMS AND RAN FOR THE JUNGLE. A GREENISH GLOW ONCE MORE ENVELOPED HER FORM AS THE STARTLING TRANSMIGRATION TOOK PLACE ONCE AGAIN...

WAIT! COME BACK! DIANE!

HERE THEY COME NOW! IT MATTERS LITTLE WHAT HAPPENS TO ME, BUT I'LL FIX THEIR SCALY HIDES FOR WHAT THEY DID TO DIANE!

CHARGING UP THE ROCKY SLOPE TO A LARGE BALANCING STONE, ROY STRAINED WITH ALL HIS STRENGTH, AND...

IT'S ROLLING! IT'S STARTING AN AVALANCHE!

WITH A SNARLING RUSH OF SOUND, AN ENTIRE SECTION OF THE MOUNTAIN CRUMBLED AWAY. MOUNTING IN FURY, TONS OF ROCK AND DEBRIS RAINED SUDDEN DEATH ON THE WRITHING HORDE BELOW...

LEAVING THE SCENE OF DEVASTATION, ROY HEADED BACK FOR CAMP...

THAT MONSTER IN THE CAVE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT HER *REAL* BODY DYING IF SHE TOOK THE FINAL DRINK! MAYBE IT ISN'T TOO LATE YET!

AND A SHORT WHILE LATER...

OH, ROY, IT'S BEEN SO AWFUL! I'VE HAD SUCH A TERRIBLE NIGHTMARE. I WAS IN SOME KIND OF DREADFUL DANGER— HIDEOUS MONSTERS SURROUNDED ME— I FELT SO LOST— SO...

IT'S ALL OVER, DARLING! YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR NOW!

IT'S ALL SO HAZY— BUT IT SEEMS THAT YOU WERE INVOLVED IN IT, TOO. TELL ME, ROY— WAS IT OR WASN'T IT A DREAM?

OF COURSE IT WAS ONLY A BAD DREAM, DIANE! FORGET IT!

MY DARLING, YOU WILL NEVER KNOW WHAT A HORRIBLE FATE YOU JUST BARELY ESCAPED FROM!

THE END

EACH MAN'S LIFE IS MEASURED, SO THEY SAY. DEATH KNOWS AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT THE HOURS AND DAYS, EVEN THE MINUTES, LEFT OF EACH INDIVIDUAL'S LIFE. AND, UNFORTUNATELY, THERE'S REALLY NOTHING MUCH ONE CAN DO ABOUT IT. AS JOHNNY NORRIS' GHOST ONCE SAID, CHANGING THE OLD ADAGE OF "IF THE SHOE FITS PUT IT ON," TO...

IF THE COFFIN FITS...GET IN!

YOU'LL BE BACK! I'VE WAITED THIS LONG, I CAN WAIT A FEW MORE MINUTES-- HOURS!

NO! NO! NOT THE COFFINS! I'LL RUN AND HIDE! YOU'LL NEVER FIND ME!

THE FUNERAL AT LAST WAS OVER THAT RAIN-CHILLED SEPTEMBER AFTERNOON. JOHNNY AND BILL NORRIS SLOWLY WALKED FROM THE CEMETERY. THE OLDER BROTHER, JOHNNY, WAS TRYING TO COMFORT BILL...

DON'T TAKE IT SO HARD, BILL! EVERYBODY'S TIME COMES, EVEN IF HE IS ONE OF YOUR BEST FRIENDS!

I KNOW, JOHNNY! YOU ALWAYS SAY-- "IF THE COFFIN FITS"-- BUT GOOD OLD MACFADDEN WAS ALMOST ANOTHER BROTHER TO ME.

SNAP OUT OF IT, BILL. LET'S NOT DISCUSS THE FUNERAL ANYMORE!

LOOK! THERE'S SOMEONE WALKING TOWARD TOWN. WE'D BETTER STOP AND SEE IF THEY WANT A LIFT. IT'S GROWN DARK AND THE RAIN IS WORSE.

PALETTE

Mysterious Adventures #4, October 1951. Art: Palette. Publisher: Story Comics.

HOP IN, WE'RE GOING TO TOWN. IT'S NO NIGHT OUT FOR A STROLL!

THANK YOU-- I'LL BE THANKFUL FOR THE RIDE.

BILL'S SPIRITS SEEMED TO RISE WITH THE PRESENCE OF THE BEAUTIFUL AND MYSTERIOUS GIRL...

WERE YOU AT THE MACFADDEN FUNERAL?

WELL--- YES...

I'M GLAD WE CAME ALONG BEFORE YOU GOT TOO DRENCHED!

DESPITE THE GIRL'S REQUEST, ONCE THEY REACHED TOWN, THAT THEY... "JUST DROP HER OFF ANYWHERE"... THE BROTHERS INSISTED THEY DRIVE HER TO HER HOME...

I LIVE OVER THE CURIO SHOP. WHY DON'T YOU AND YOUR BROTHER LOOK INSIDE? IT'S AN AMAZING PLACE.

WHO CARES ABOUT CURIOS— I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HER BETTER!

COME ON, JOHNNY. LET'S LOOK AROUND A BIT!

WE HAVE MANY STRANGE ITEMS HERE--- YES, MANY! ESPECIALLY LITTLE COFFINS!

I THOUGHT I KNEW THIS SECTION OF TOWN, BUT I'VE NEVER NOTICED YOUR PLACE BEFORE!

BILL! COME HERE!

LOOK AT THESE! THE PERFECT WORKMANSHIP! THEY'RE BEAUTIES! I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THEM!

LET'S GET THEM IF THEY AREN'T TOO MUCH! SORT OF A MOMENTO OF THIS DAY!

I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO SNAP OUT OF IT! THAT'S PRETTY MORBID, ISN'T IT?

THERE CAN BE NOTHING MORBID ABOUT BEAUTIFUL WORK LIKE THAT! I MUST LEAVE NOW!

BUT WHAT'S YOUR NAME? CAN'T I SEE SEE YOU AGAIN SOON?

IT'S HELEN... I'M SURE WE WILL MEET AGAIN!

AFTER A BIT THE BROTHERS LEFT THE STRANGE LITTLE CURIO SHOP,..AND WHEN THEY DID, THE TWO MINIATURE COFFINS WENT WITH THEM...

SEE YOU TOMORROW, JOHNNY!

OKAY, AND I STILL WISH YOU'D SWALLOW YOUR SILLY PRIDE AND MOVE IN WITH ME. WHO CARES IF I DO MAKE MORE MONEY THAN YOU?

THAT NIGHT, AFTER JOHNNY HAD RETIRED, HE COULDN'T GET THE ODD LITTLE COFFIN-BOX OUT OF HIS MIND. HE GOT UP AND EXAMINED IT BY THE LIGHT OF THE DYING FIRE...

STRANGE-- THE BOX FEELS LARGER THAN IT DID BACK IN THE CURIO SHOP-- ALMOST AS THOUGH IT HAD GROWN IN THE LAST FEW HOURS!

THE NEXT EVENING, BEFORE JOHNNY WENT TO BED, HE ONCE MORE EXAMINED THE COFFIN BOX...

THIS SHOULD PROVE IT ONE WAY OR THE OTHER! I COULDN'T GET THE BLASTED THING OFF MY MIND ALL DAY! IT'S DRIVING ME CRAZY! BUT NOW, I'LL KNOW IN THE MORNING!

THE SAME NIGHT JOHNNY SET HIS PLAN INTO OPERATION. HIS YOUNGER BROTHER WAS ALSO BUSY... BILL HAD FALLEN IN LOVE WITH HELEN...

I WAS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, AND I THOUGHT.....

I KNOW -- BUT YOU'RE MUCH TOO SOON! NOW IS NOT THE TIME! BUT DO COME IN, YOU MAY STAY ONLY A SHORT WHILE THOUGH!

WHY ARE YOU SO COLD? BUT YOU'RE SO BEAUTIFUL!

SOON WE WILL KNOW EACH OTHER BETTER AND YOU CAN STAY LONGER-- MUCH LONGER!

JOHNNY, WHO HAD GONE TO BED RATHER THAN CALL UPON MYSTERIOUS YOUNG LADIES, WAS UP THE NEXT MORNING LONG BEFORE HIS ALARM CLOCK RANG...

NO! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE! BUT STILL-- I MUST BELIEVE MY EYES!

NO, I HAVEN'T NOTICED MY COFFIN-BOX ONE WAY OR THE OTHER... BUT WHAT YOU SAY IS RIDICULOUS!

JUST THE SAME, BILL, MY COFFIN-BOX DID GROW IN LENGTH-- A GOOD FOUR INCHES LAST NIGHT! GO LOOK AT YOURS! I'LL WAIT!

O.K., SO THEY ARE GROWING BIGGER! IT'S SOME KIND OF A SILLY TRICK! PUT YOURS DOWN IN THE TRUNK ROOM AND FORGET IT IF IT BOTHERS YOU SO MUCH!

HUT

JOHNNY TOOK HIS BROTHER'S ADVICE AND SEVERAL WEEKS PASSED. THEN, ONE DAY, JOHNNY HAD TO GO DOWN TO THE TRUNK ROOM. HE COULDN'T GET HIS MIND OFF THE COFFIN-BOX CURIO THAT HE KNEW WAS GROWING DOWN THERE IN THE DAMP DARKNESS...

CAREFUL, JOHN, WHAT YOU HAVE HIDDEN MIGHT BEST BE KEPT THAT WAY!

OH, IT'S YOU MIKE! STILL LIVING HERE, EH?

THIS IS A SPOOKY PLACE, MIKE! BUT I MUST LOOK IN THERE! I MUST FIND OUT...

TRUNK STORAGE

IT DID GROW! UNBELIEVABLE! LOOK-- WHAT'S THAT-- A SILVER NAMEPLATE...

NO! NO! TODAY'S OCTOBER 3RD!

JOHN NORRIS
BORN: MAY 16, 1925
DIED: OCT 3, 1950

BILL! BILL! I GOTTA GET BILL! WE GOTTA RUN-- GET AWAY!

SNAP OUT OF IT, GUY! I'LL GO AWAY WITH YOU SOMEPLACE! I CAN USE A VACATION, ANYWAY! I HAVE A DATE WITH HELEN... BUT I'LL GO WITH YOU!

HAVE YOU LOOKED AT YOURS? HAVE YOU?

HEY! WHOA--SLOW DOWN--NO, I HAVEN'T! I PUT IT DOWN IN THE BASEMENT, BUT I'LL TAKE YOUR WORD FOR IT!

WE'VE GOT TO RUN! SOMETHING HORRIBLE IS GOING TO HAPPEN!

REALIZING THAT HIS BROTHER MUST BE IN A STATE OF SHOCK AND HYSTERIA, BILL DECIDED TO PRETEND TO AGREE WITH HIM...

MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT. ANY IDEA WHERE WE OUGHT TO GO?

I DON'T CARE! JUST SO IT'S FAR AWAY FROM HERE-- AWAY FROM THAT ACCURSED COFFIN WITH MY NAME ON IT!

AS THE MILES SPED BY, THE FEAR THAT POSSESSED JOHNNY SLOWLY INFECTED HIS YOUNGER BROTHER! THEY DROVE ON AND ON, HIGHER AND HIGHER INTO THE WILD MOUNTAINOUS AREA...

WE'RE LOST! WHY DIDN'T YOU LET ME DRIVE?

IN THE STATE YOU WERE IN, I KNOW YOU COULD NOT HAVE DONE ANY BETTER! BESIDES, IF WE'RE LOST, ISN'T THAT GOOD?

YOU'RE NOT MAKING SENSE! THERE'S A LIGHT! DRIVE UP THE ROAD A BIT, AND I'LL GO IN AND FIND OUT WHERE WE ARE!

BILL PULLED UP AT THE FOOT OF A ROTTING WOODEN STAIRCASE THAT LED UP THE MOUNTAINSIDE TO THE DERELICT HOUSE OF THE SHINING LIGHT... JOHNNY WENT TO THE DOOR ALONE ...AND SAW... HELEN!

GOOD EVENING! IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU WERE GETTING HERE! I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU FOR OVER AN HOUR!

WHA— WHAT? YOU WERE EXPECTING US? I DON'T BELIEVE YOU! HOW DID YOU GET HERE?

THE COFFINS! NO! NO! I'LL RUN! WE'LL HIDE! THEY'LL NEVER GET US!

SOOOO? I'VE WAITED THIS LONG-- I CAN WAIT A FEW MORE MINUTES--EVEN HOURS!

JOHNNY RACED BACK TO THE SAFETY OF HIS BROTHER AND THE CAR. HE RAN AS ONE IN A NIGHTMARE, LIKE A MAN RUNNING KNEE-DEEP IN THICK SYRUP.

HEY! WHAT'S GOING ON? WHAT HAPPENED?

GET OVER! GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE! NO TIME TO TALK... NO TIME TO....

OHHHH! MY ARM! JOHNNY! JOHNNY! WHERE ARE YOU?

JOHNNY, TURNING THE CAR AROUND ON THE NARROW ROAD AND DRIVING LIKE A MADMAN, STARTED A SUICIDAL DASH DOWN OUT OF THE MOUNTAINS AND CRACKED UP THE CAR!

JOHNNY! LOOK OUT!

EEEEEEEEEEE!

THOUGH BADLY INJURED HIMSELF, BILL RETURNED TO THE BURNING WRECK ONLY TO FIND HIS BROTHER DEAD, CRUSHED ALMOST BEYOND RECOGNITION.

HELP, GOTTA GET HELP. THAT HOUSE-- I'LL GO BACK TO THE HOUSE!

OOHHHHHHHH!

THE NEXT TWENTY MINUTES WERE AN ETERNITY COMPOSED OF PAIN AND THE SLOW DREADFUL PROGRESS BACK TO THE HOUSE AND IT'S LONE LIGHT THAT BECKONED BILL ON.

GASP--DON'T KNOW IF I--GASP-- CAN MAKE IT OR NOT--GASP-- HELP! HELP!

AND THEN OUT OF THE DARKNESS LIKE A GUIDING SPIRIT OF HOPE...

WE HAD A DATE, DEAR. COME, LET ME HELP YOU BACK TO THE HOUSE!

YOU! HELEN! HOW DID YOU GET HERE?

AS THOUGH HER WORDS WERE A COMMAND HE MUST OBEY, BILL LOOKED AND THE SIGHT HE SAW STARTLED HIM WITH DEEPEST TERROR, FOR JOHNNY, THE BROTHER HE'D LEFT SMASHED AND BURNING IN A WRECK UPON A CLIFF-SIDE, NOW LAY SMILING IN DEATH UP AT HIM.

BEFORE SHE COULD ANSWER, SUCH WAS THE GROWING FEAR WITHIN BILL, THAT HE TURNED AND TRIED TO FLEE.

UUUNNGH!

DON'T GO, PLEASE DON'T. ONCE I TOLD YOU THAT SOON WE COULD BE TOGETHER--WELL, NOW IS THAT TIME--NOW!

THE COFFINS! SO THAT'S WHAT SCARED POOR JOHNNY SO--SAY, WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND HERE?

LOOK--LOOK CLOSELY AT THE COFFINS!

HE ALMOST DIDN'T MAKE IT! WE HAD AN APPOINTMENT, AND HE TRIED TO CHEAT ME, BUT I WON AFTER ALL!

WHO--WHO ARE YOU? HELEN, WHAT ARE YOU?

NOW I KNOW WHO YOU ARE--YOU'RE DEATH! YOU'RE DEATH, AREN'T YOU?

PERHAPS, SOME MEN CALL ME THAT. DOES IT MATTER? NOW COME, YOU'RE TIRED. IT'S LATE. YOU'RE BED IS READY--COME!

YES, THAT NIGHT BILL JOINED HIS BROTHER---SO, TONIGHT, SOMEWHERE, A TALL THIN CADAVEROUS MAN AND A BEAUTIFUL DARK GIRL ARE AT WORK. THERE COMES A SOUND OF A SAW ON WOOD, THE SCREECH OF AN ENGRAVING TOOL ON METAL. THESE TWO ARE CAREFUL CRAFTSMEN--FOR ALWAYS, ALWAYS THEIR COFFINS WILL FIT!

THE END

Tyrant Lizard Kings
EMPIRE